**Merry Christmas from the Moon!**

**By Edmund A. Fortier**

***No human had ever seen Earth like this before.***

Every December, people around the world celebrate the holiday season by sending greetings to family and friends. But in 1968 something unusual happened. The world received a Christmas greeting from the Moon.

The message was from the crew of Apollo 8, which was 240,000 miles from Earth. On Christmas Eve, Apollo 8 was circling the Moon in an orbit just sixty-nine miles above the cratered surface. The three astronauts on board were all looking forward to the trip home, which would begin in the morning. But first they were going to make a final broadcast for television. Back on Earth, half a billion people were waiting to see it.

Apollo 8 was the first manned spacecraft to orbit the Moon. The crew’s mission was to test the ship, which was made up of a command module and a service module. In future missions, a lunar module would be added to land the first astronauts on the Moon. Anything might go wrong. So far, nothing had. But the crucial firing of the rocket that would return the men to Earth was still to come. If the rocket engine failed, the men would be trapped in lunar orbit with no hope of rescue.

This famous photograph was taken by the Apollo 8 crew on December 24, 1968. They were the first people to see Earth from so far away. That night, in a history-making broad cast, they shared this sight with the rest of the world.

The commander of Apollo 8, Frank Borman, knew the world would be watching. He had brought along a passage to read, but he had been too busy to plan the whole telecast. Then he and his crew, Jim Lovell and Bill Anders, saw something wonderful as they orbited the Moon. Borman knew at once what he wanted to do. But it would take some planning. It had to be timed just right.

Borman began the telecast. First, each man gave his impressions of the Moon. Next, the astronauts pointed out different features on the surface as it slowly passed below them. All this time, the planned moment had been drawing closer and closer. When the time arrived, Borman and his crew were ready.

Anders announced that the crew of Apollo 8 had a message for Earth. In turn, Anders, Lovell, and Borman read the Bible passage Borman had brought with him. It was the story of Creation from the Book of Genesis. As the men read, a camera on Apollo 8 was pointed forward, toward the Moon’s horizon. The wonderful sight the men had marveled at was now on television screens around the world.

No one on Earth had ever seen it before. There, above the lifeless lunar landscape, the distant Earth was rising. It looked like a fragile holiday ornament.

That image was a Christmas present to the world from the crew of Apollo 8.

1. Read the sentence from the article.

**The crew’s mission was to test the ship, which was made up of a command module and a service module.**

What does the word *mission* mean as used in the sentence above?

1. a dangerous trip
2. a job to complete
3. a person who travels into space
4. a vehicle that carries passengers
5. Read the sentence from the article.

**The wonderful sight the men had marveled at was now on television screens around the world.**

Which of the following words from the sentence would be used to define the word *marveled*?

1. around
2. sight
3. television
4. wonderful
5. Read the sentence from the article.

**There, above the lifeless lunar landscape, the distant Earth was rising.**

What is the meaning of the word *distant* as used in the sentence above?

1. famous
2. far away
3. scientific
4. motionless
5. Read the sentence from the article.

**But the crucial firing of the rocket that would return the men to Earth was still to come.**

What does the word *crucial* mean as used in the sentence above?

1. important
2. powerful
3. straight
4. unique
5. Read the sentence from the article.

**On Christmas Eve, Apollo 8 was circling the Moon in an orbit just sixty-nine miles above the cratered surface.**

Which of the following context clues would be BEST used to define the word *orbit*?

1. above
2. circling
3. miles
4. surface
5. Which two words from the article have almost the SAME meanings?
6. greeting, present
7. rocket, astronauts
8. commander, crew
9. broadcast, message
10. Which sentence from the article BEST explains the main idea?
11. *Apollo 8* was the first manned spacecraft to orbit the Moon.
12. Anders announced that the crew of *Apollo 8* had a message for Earth.
13. All this time, the planned moment had been drawing closer and closer.
14. That night, in a history-making broadcast, they shared this sight with the rest of the world.
15. With which statement would the author MOST LIKELY agree?
16. The *Apollo 8* had a dangerous mission.
17. The men on *Apollo 8* made a historic trip into space.
18. The astronauts should have been better prepared for being on television.
19. The rising of the sun on Earth is better than seeing the rising of the Earth from space.
20. The photograph was included in the article to show
21. the cratered surface of the Moon.
22. the distance between the Moon and Earth.
23. to show that Earth was larger than the sun.
24. to show the view of Earth captured by the crew of *Apollo 8*.
25. Read the sentences from the article.

**There, above the lifeless lunar landscape, the distant Earth was rising. It looked like a fragile holiday ornament.**

What was the author comparing Earth to in the sentences above?

1. the Moon
2. the lunar module
3. a small decoration
4. a holiday greeting

Answer Key

1. Correct Answer is B, DOK 2
2. Correct Answer is D, DOK 2
3. Correct Answer is B, DOK 2
4. Correct Answer is A, DOK 2
5. Correct Answer is B, DOK 2
6. Correct Answer is D, DOK 2
7. Correct Answer is D, DOK 3
8. Correct Answer is B, DOK 3
9. Correct Answer is D, DOK 2
10. Correct Answer is C, DOK 2